

AN
ABRIDGEMENT
OF
FIVE DISCOURSES,
ON DIFFERENT SUBJECTS;

INTENDED
TO OBVIATE SEVERAL OBJECTIONS
WHICH HAVE BEEN MADE TO THE DOCTRINE
OF
The Universal Restoration.
AND CALCULATED
TO ANSWER OTHER IMPORTANT PURPOSES.

BY RICHARD WRIGHT.

Wilsbech:

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ABRIDGEMENT
OF
FIVE DISCOURSES

NOTES: 1. 10/1/54



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ADVERTISEMENT.

THE Discourses, of which the following pages are an Abridgement, were preached without the slightest intention of any part of them being published; but the Author finding, afterward, that several judicious Friends wished that at least the substance of them might be made public, he endeavoured to recollect the principal observations, and put them together on paper. He has endeavoured to make the abridgment as complete an epitome of the original discourses, as his memory and judgement rendered practicable.

The Reader is not to expect, in this small performance, a regular and formal defence of the doctrine of the Universal Restoration, as the writer's design was simply to establish a few grounds of argument in its favour, and to obviate some of the objections which he has heard urged against it.

The inveteracy of human depravity has been frequently urged as an insurmountable obstacle to the universal restoration, and as a reason why the passages of scripture which seem to express that doctrine, ought not to be understood in their plain and literal sense; but if it be proved that no obstacle is too great for God to surmount in carrying his designs into effect, which is what the first of these discourses is intended to prove, it will follow that all the arguments against that doctrine, founded upon the inveteracy of sin, &c. must fall to the ground.


It has been argued that if the doctrine of the universal restoration were true, there could be no need for a Saviour, as sinners would in time expiate their sin by suffering its demerit, and so be restored on the ground of mere justice; but I know of no advocate for that doctrine who has supposed that sin could be expiated by the suffering of the sinner: on the contrary, it is maintained that the restoration will take place on the ground of the death and resurrection of Christ, and be effected by his mediation: and it is hoped that this view of the subject is conspicuous in the following discourses.

Some persons have ridiculed the doctrine of the restoration, as calculated to soothe the minds of those who are destitute of piety, and as having a general tendency to licentiousness, the writer trusts that every charge of this kind is disproved in the following pages.

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DISCOURSE



DISCOURSE I.

LUKE I. 37.

For with GOD nothing shall be impossible.

IN former ages God revealed the events of futurity to his faithful servants; he promised to do such things as were altogether above the power of nature to effect, to bring to pass what might then have been deemed morally impossible. This, owing to the blindness and incredulity of creatures, was the occasion of much infidelity. Abraham, though the friend of God, found it very difficult to believe that Sarah, who had passed the flower of her days childless, should in her old age bring forth a son: and Sarah thought it so improbable that she laughed at the idea of such an event.

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The Israelites knew not how to believe that they should be saved from impending destruction, when hemmed in by the armies of the Egyptians, between the mountains and the sea: or that JEHOVAH could preserve them from perishing in the wilderness, where no sustenance was to be found, nothing to satisfy their hunger or to allay their thirst: or that they should be enabled to subdue the strong cities, and warlike nations of Canaan, in order to their possessing the land which God had promised to give them for an inheritance: they were the subjects of much unbelief respecting these things, because they could not see how they were to be effected; yet all the above events took place.

Many parts of sacred prophecy still remain to be fulfilled; many great and precious promises, contained in the lively oracles, have not yet received their accomplishment, many wonderful events foretold in the scriptures have not yet taken place. Among the prophetic events which have yet to take place, we may reckon the return of the Jews to their own land—the things which shall befall them there—the coming of Christ—the astonishing scenes which shall attend his coming—the glorious establishment of the kingdom of Christ upon earth, during the Millenium—the general resurrection and judgement of the great day—the age of rewards and punishments—the universal restoration—and Christ's delivering
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up the kingdom to the Father. As the events I have mentioned are altogether future, and men cannot see how they are to be effected, much unbelief prevails respecting them, many are ready to ask how can such things ever take place? and because *they* see not how such great things will be brought to pass, they attempt to explain away the plain declarations of God respecting them; but this is unwise, for if "with God nothing shall be impossible," he will most certainly be able to effect every thing which he hath spoken.

To guard the text, and what may be said upon it, from abuse, I will notice certain exceptions, which are always implied when such words occur in scripture, and endeavour to ascertain their true design.

I. When it is said "with God nothing shall be impossible," it must be understood, as an exception, that God cannot act unwisely, for he is *the only wise God*, all his works are performed in wisdom, nor can it ever be possible for any thing to be more wisely done, than he doth it.

II. When such words occur in scripture, they must always be taken with this exception, that God cannot act unjustly. *Shall not the judge of all the earth do right? Is there unrighteousness with God? God forbid, for then how should God judge the world? He will render*

unto man his righteousness. He is the holy Lord God, righteous in all his works and ways. Are not my ways equal, (i. e.) perfectly just, saith Jehovah. Of course it must be impossible for God ever to act unjustly.

III. God is love, therefore when it is declared that nothing shall be impossible to him, it is necessarily implied, as an exception, that it never can be possible for him to act contrary to love: for him to act contrary to love, would be to act unlike himself, contrary to his own immutable nature, which cannot be supposed without manifest absurdity. God cannot possibly cease to be good, merciful, and gracious, for then his character would cease to be what himself hath declared it to be, *The Lord merciful and gracious, abundant in goodness and truth*—then the positive declarations of his word would fall to the ground, for it is positively declared that *he is good unto all, and his tender mercies are over all his works, and that his mercy endureth for ever.*

IV. God that cannot lie; though we believe not, he abideth faithful, he cannot deny himself, the Scriptures cannot be broken. Such declarations of the sacred penmen establish another exception, (i. e.) that it is impossible for God ever to falsify his own declarations, by acting contrary to them; ever to give the lie to his own avowed designs, by failing to carry them into effect; or ever to suffer the scripture to be broken, by permitting

permitting any part thereof to remain eternally unfulfilled.

On the whole, it must be taken for granted, that it never can be possible for God to change his nature, or his eternal counsel and designs, as declared to us in the scriptures; seeing *he is in one mind, and who can turn him? with him is no variableness, neither shadow of turning; he changeth not; his counsel shall stand, and he will do all his pleasure:* therefore when the angel said, "for with God nothing shall be impossible," we must understand him to mean that God would make it evident that nothing which he had designed to do, or spoken of by his servants in the scriptures, should be impossible for him to effect.

I will next glance at the general arguments which may be brought to prove that nothing can be impossible to God, which is not contrary to his character and designs.

I. The consideration of the absolute infinite perfections of the *Most High*, must make every thing appear possible to him, which it is his sovereign good pleasure to effect. Can he, who is infinite in wisdom, ever be at a loss to find means to accomplish his designs? Can he, who is Almighty, ever want power to use the means dictated by his wisdom, or to make them truly effective? Can he, who is holy and true, good and gracious, ever fail to employ all the resources

resources of infinite wisdom and almighty power, to display his perfect justice, to verify the truth of his word by its accomplishment, and to carry into effect all his gracious designs?

II. A view of the supreme and universal government of God, that *his throne is high above the heavens, and his kingdom ruleth over all, that not a sparrow falleth to the ground without him, even the very hairs of our head are all numbered, that he doth according to his own will in the armies of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth,* must lead us to conclude, that he hath such dominion over all creatures and circumstances, that nothing can be impossible to him.

III. Several expresse declarations of scripture go directly to the same point as the words of our text, such as *Shall any thing be too hard for the Lord? Whatsoever his soul desireth even that he doth. I know thou canst do every thing, and no thought, (i. e.) nothing which thou thinkest to do, shall be withholden from thee. My counsel shall stand, I will do all my pleasure, I will work and who shall let it, with God all things are possible. Do we with all our hearts believe these declarations?*

IV. What God hath already done, in creation, providence, and grace, ought to convince us that nothing shall be impossible to him. Survey the amazing system of the universe, and then say what can be impossible to him who made
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all these things, who measured the waters in the hollow of his hand, and meted out the heavens with the span, and comprehended the dust of the earth in a measure, and weighed the mountains in scales, and the hills in a balance? What cannot he do who is the everlasting God, the LORD, the creator of the ends of the earth, who fainteth not neither is weary? Think of his infinite greatness, before whom all nations are as the drop of a bucket, and are counted as the small dust of a balance, who taketh up the isles as a very little thing, before whom all nations are as nothing, and are counted to him less than nothing and vanity, and then say if any thing can be too hard for the LORD. Lift up your eyes on high, and behold, who hath created these things, that bringeth out their host by number; he calleth them all by names, by the greatness of his might, for that he is strong in power, not one faileth. Thus review the systems of nature and providence, and then say what GOD cannot do.

Consider what JEHOVAH hath done in the greatness of his love, in giving his son to die for sinners, in opening the way of salvation, and displaying the riches of his grace, before mankind in the gospel; also what he hath done, for those who have believed on his son, and by the gospel in the world; consider all these things, and then say what his love cannot effect.

V. There can no difficulties arise to obstruct the accomplishment of the divine designs, of a different nature to those which he hath

hath already triumphed over. I blush while I think of the incredulity of mortals, which renders it necessary for me to talk of difficulties, when treating of the designs of the Omnipotent, for it is only to creatures that things are hard and difficult, nothing can be so to God; but as it seems necessary to notice difficulties, while speaking of the great things which he hath engaged to accomplish, I observe that the greatest which can be supposed may be classed under two heads, (*i. e.*) either what men call natural impossibilities, or what they call moral impossibilities; nor can we conceive of any obstacle to God's doing all his pleasure, too great to be comprised under either the one or the other of these heads; and if it can be proved that the *Most High*, in accomplishing his own designs, hath already triumphed over both the one and the other, it will follow, as a consequence, that he can do it again: and if neither what are deemed natural impossibilities, nor what are deemed moral impossibilities, be impossibilities to God, it must follow, that with him nothing can be impossible. God promised that Sarah should have a son, when she was arrived at such an age as rendered that event naturally impossible, yet he fulfilled his promise. It was a natural impossibility for the Israelites to pass through the sea, as on dry land; for them to find bread and water in the desert, for forty years; yet God effected both these events. It was foretold that a virgin should conceive and bear a son, this being what

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is called a natural impossibility, had men reasoned about this event before it took place, as many have done since about the future accomplishment of prophecy, they might have said it must be taken in a figurative sense, it is impossible it should ever be literally fulfilled, yet it was literally fulfilled. The virgin herself at first expressed some doubt, *how shall this thing be?* but the angel assured her that with God nothing should be impossible. Christ told his disciples that it was easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God, in doing which he stated the strongest moral impossibility; yet he immediately declared that it was possible with God, though impossible with men: and we read in the scriptures of rich men who were saved. Hence it is evident, from undeniable facts, that God hath carried his designs into effect, when opposed by natural and moral impossibilities, it follows, that neither the one nor the other can be an insurmountable obstacle to the accomplishment of his designs in future.

God hath in various instances made the wrath of man to praise him, and overruled the evil passions and worst actions of men, so as to make them terminate in his glory, and promote his great designs. An instance of this we have in the case of Joseph's brethren, they were influenced by the worst passions, envy and hatred, their conduct was altogether unjust and

and cruel, yet God overruled it for his own purposes. Another instance we have in the case of the Jews, who crucified the Lord of Glory, their designs and actions were altogether murderous, yet their designs and actions were no obstruction to God's plan of grace and salvation, which he would exhibit to the world at large; on the contrary, his all-directing hand made them subservient thereto. Why then should it be thought a thing impossible for God to make all the wrath of creatures ultimately praise him?

I will now particularize upon the subject before us in a more direct practical way.

I. There is not the least reason for us to suppose that it is impossible for God to punish the stoutest hearted sinners, the most rebellious of his creatures, in such a manner as shall make them feel what an evil and bitter thing it is to sin against him. This may be illustrated by the case of that son of pride, Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon. Elated with pride he ascribed all his power, greatness, strength, riches, and dominion solely to himself, as if he had been independent of God, and above the reach of the divine hand; but the Most High found means to humble him, and to bring him to extol and praise his name: herein we have an example of his ability to humble the most proud and obdurate of his creatures, and to bring them to willing subjection. Know, O ye
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hardened rebels, against the divine majesty, your sins shall find you out, you shall be humbled at the divine footstool, and feel what a bitter thing it is to sin against God.

II. Let it no longer be thought impossible for God to save the most guilty, depraved, and wretched of his creatures. He hath manifested his love to them, and made provision for their salvation in Christ. He hath displayed the greatness of his mercy in the salvation of the chief of sinners, as in the case of Saul of Tarsus, who was a blasphemer, a persecutor, and injurious, who styles himself the chief of sinners; but who, notwithstanding, obtained mercy, and is set forth as a pattern of the long suffering of God to them who shall hereafter believe unto life eternal. Let no guilty rebel despair of forgiveness, the sceptre of mercy is held out to him, grace and salvation are exhibited before him in the gospel, Christ is able to save unto the uttermost all them that come unto God by him: if the sinner seeks for salvation he is sure to find it.

III. The possibility of God's making all things work together for good, to them that love him, ought no longer to be doubted. A combination of circumstances may seem to be against us, to be working for our hurt; this was the case with good old Jacob; Joseph he supposed was killed, Simeon he supposed was no more, and Benjamin, the son of his old age,

was about to be taken from him, all these things appeared to be against him; but they were all working together for his good. How wonderful are the ways of providence! ye have heard of the patience of Job, and have seen the end of the LORD, that he is very pitiful, and of tender mercy. Let us then learn to leave ourselves, and all our concerns, in the hands of our God; and preserve our minds in peace, by a settled trust and confidence in him.

IV. If nothing shall be impossible to God, it ought no longer to be thought impossible for him to accomplish all the great things foretold in his word, even for him to subdue all things to himself, to gather together in one all things in Christ, to reconcile all things unto himself by Jesus Christ.

I will conclude this discourse with asking whether we can deny that all things are possible to God, without committing the same sin as Israel of old did, when they limited the holy one of Israel?

DISCOURSE

DISCOURSE II.

ACTS X. 36.

Jesus Christ he is Lord of all.

JESUS Christ is the principal subject treated of in the gospel, which is on that account stiled the record which God gave of his son. He is the substance of all evangelical preaching. Paul's assertions concerning what himself, and the rest of the apostles preached, shew that he and they viewed the subject in this light.—*We preach Christ crucified. Whom we preach. I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified. We preach not ourselves but Christ Jesus the Lord.* We may learn from these passages how much the apostles dwelt upon this topic. Let it not be supposed that

that the minister of the gospel has but a narrow field to range in, that his matter must soon be exhausted, because he hath only this subject to dwell upon, *the Lord Jesus Christ*, for this is a subject too copious to be exhausted, so extensive and delightful that we may continually expatiate upon it, and ever find something new. Delightful task! to describe the glories of Immanuel—the transcendent excellencies of the person of Christ—his various offices and relations as the anointed of the Father—his suitableness and allsufficiency as a saviour—the great facts recorded concerning him in the new testament—the perfection of his work—the depth of his humiliation and sufferings—the height of his exaltation and glory—his authority and dominion as lord of all—the various parts of his mediatorial reign, and the blessings of his kingdom—his love which passeth knowledge! upon these things we may ever dwell with increasing delight, and find our souls edified, comforted, and sanctified.

The part of this subject to which I now call your attention is the lordship or dominion of Christ, which is a matter of the greatest importance to all men every where; for his government is altogether mediatorial, and hath for its object the bringing of sinners to God. He is the mediator between God and men; as such he gave himself a ransom for all, as such he is exalted to be a prince and a saviour, to give repentance and remission of sins, as such

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all creatures are put under his authority, and must give an account of themselves to him; *as such* he is exhibited in the gospel to be the salvation of God to the ends of the earth, neither is there salvation in any other. Divine revelation relates principally to the lordship and reign of Christ as mediator: with the conclusion of his mediatorial reign, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to the Father, the astonishing scenes laid open in the scriptures will terminate: and we have no knowledge of any thing beyond that period, save that God shall be all in all, consequently that throughout the creation there shall be complete purity and happiness. The subject before us is a never failing source of enjoyment to real christians; their present safety, peace, and felicity, all their hopes of immortal life and glory, are immediately connected with it. These considerations may serve to impress your minds with the great importance of the subject I have to discuss at this time.

When speaking of the lordship of Jesus Christ the mediator, I wish to place before you the grounds of his mediatorial authority, the foundation on which his throne is established, and his ability to sway the sceptre, and guide the wheels of the mediatorial government.

I. The authority of Jesus Christ as mediator is founded upon the appointment of the Father. JEHOVAH spake in vision to his holy one,

one, and said, *I have laid help upon one that is mighty: I have exalted one chosen out of the people.—Also I will make him first-born, higher than the kings of the earth.* In despite of the rage of the heathen, &c. the divine appointment stands firm; he who sitteth in the heavens, laugheth at all the feeble efforts of an infuriated world to annul the authority of his holy one, and saith, in contempt of all their rage, *Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion. To his only begotten he saith, ask of me, and I will give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession.* Christ saith, *all things are delivered unto me of my Father.* The Father hath given him power over all flesh. God hath highly exalted him, made him both Lord and Christ, whom he hath appointed heir of all things. He hath seated him at his own right hand, and said unto him, *Sit thou on my right hand, until thy foes be made thy footstool.* He is set down with the Father in his throne. Thus the lordship of Christ is founded in the infinite perfection, immutable counsel, supreme appointment, and divine good pleasure of JEHOVAH; and he, the mediator, firmly placed in the throne of the Father.

II. The foundation of the mediatorial throne of Christ is laid in blood; not in the blood of innocent victims, slain by a daring usurper; not in the blood of guilty rebels, slaughtered by a vengeful sword; but in his own most precious blood, who offered himself

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as a lamb without spot to God, in the blood of the just one, who died for the unjust, that he might bring them to God. Sin, like a mighty conqueror, had extended his empire over the whole world; death had seized upon human nature, and all mankind were destined to become his prey: the empire of Christ was to be established upon the ruins of the empire of sin and death, that as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life, by Jesus Christ our Lord. Hence Christ hath appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself; that he might abolish death, and bring life and immortality to light: he humbled himself, and became obedient to death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess, that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

III. The mediatorial throne of Christ is established by his near relation to, and intimate union with, the Father. JEHOVAH hath said unto him, *Thou art my son*, and upon this ground hath promised him unlimited dominion. He hath also said, *I will be to him a Father, and he shall be to me a son (i. e.)* I will act the part of a Father in investing him with such glory and dominion as become the son of the highest. He is the only begotten of the Father,

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of course the right of inheritance devolves upon him. The union between the Father and the son is so intimate and perfect that Christ could declare, *I and the Father are one. He that hath seen me hath seen the Father. The Father that dwelleth in me he doeth the works. What things soever he doeth, these also doeth the son likewise.* Thus the mediatorial government is established, and carried on, by the divine perfections, operating by the man whom JEHOVAH hath made strong for himself, his own son.

IV- The ability of Christ to sway the sceptre, and direct all the wheels of the mediatorial government, appears, from the consideration of his character, of the fulness which dwells in him, and of what he has already done. His name is *Immanuel, God with us. The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The prince of peace, The second man is the Lord from heaven. It pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell. In him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily.* The most consummate wisdom must be necessary in conducting the affairs of such an extensive government as that of Christ is, and he is *the wisdom of God, in him are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge;* therefore he can never be at a loss; but must know on every occasion how to proceed, what measures to choose, and how to arrange them for the best, during the whole of his ministrations. Great power must be necessary in order to the carrying into effect all the measures of the mediatorial government,

government, and Christ is *the power of God*. *All power is given unto him in heaven and in earth*. His harbinger declared that *God giveth not the spirit by measure unto him*. Isaiah, when prophesying of Christ, said, *The spirit of Jehovah shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge, and of the fear of Jehovah*. Consequently the measures of his government cannot fail for want of his possessing sufficient ability to carry them into effect. Great experience must be requisite in managing the affairs of the mediatorial kingdom, that experience Christ hath had, for he was made *perfect through sufferings*—he was *tempted in all points as we are, yet without sin*—it behoved him to be *made in all things like unto his brethren*—that he might be a *merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God*. The mediator hath passed through such a variety of circumstances that he knoweth how to act with the utmost prudence and tenderness towards all his subjects. *The bruised reed he will not break, and the smoking flax he will not quench*. He can be touched with the feeling of our infirmities. Christ hath already wrought such wonders, and given such unequivocal proofs of his matchless prowess, that no room is left for us to doubt his ability to perform whatever remains for him to do as mediator. He by whom *all things were created that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers; what can*

be too great for him to effect? What cannot he atchieve, who by his invincible strength triumphed in the dreadful contest with all the powers of darkness; who by his matchless prowess burst the bands of death, and the bars of the grave asunder; who by his puissance vanquished the powers of earth and hell, and trod down the strength of the enemy? Hath not the Lord by his undaunted courage, his matchless power, and unrivalled exploits, shown himself worthy of, and able to manage, the whole of the mediatorial government.

I will next attempt to describe the extent of the lordship of Jesus Christ.

I. *The mediator is lord over all creatures.* The apostle was convinced by his being sent to preach the gospel to Cornelius and his family, who were mere Gentiles, and by the blessings thereof being extended to them, that the lordship of Christ was not restricted to the Jews. Under the former dispensation, the Mosaic economy was like a wall which separated the Jews from the rest of the world, and restricted to the former the peculiar blessings of revelation; but now the middle wall of partition is broken down, *Christ having reconciled both unto himself in one body, by the cross, that of twain he might make one new man, so making peace.* Paul asked, *Is he the God of the Jews only? Is he not of the Gentiles also?* and answered, *Yes, of the Gentiles also.* The gospel, with all its blessings,

blessings, is sent to Gentiles, and the mediatorial authority of Christ extends over all nations.

The mediatorial authority of the son of God extends over all ranks and orders of men, on the whole face of the earth. He is made *higher than the kings of the earth. He is king of kings, and lord of lords.* Kings of the earth are exhorted to be wise, and all the judges of the earth to be instructed, by the gospel, to embrace the son of God, lest they incur his displeasure, and perish from the way. Christ died for all mankind, consequently they belong to him; and, having received power over all flesh, hath sent his gospel to be preached to every creature. As all things were created by him, and for him, as he is heir of all things, as all things are delivered to him of his Father, as he is before all things, and by him they consist, it follows, that as mediator he is lord of all. To enlarge the above position I observe,

II. *Jesus Christ is lord over all creatures, in all places.* All power in earth is given to him, it follows that he is lord over all creatures on earth; nor does his authority stop here, *To this end he both died, and rose, and revived, that he might be lord both of the dead and of the living:* consequently his dominion extends over all who have died, as well as over those who now remain on earth. Death doth not limit the power of Christ, nor divide empire with him; he hath conquered and obtained dominion
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over death, and the regions of the dead: death doth not remove men beyond the boundaries of the mediator's kingdom, they are still under his jurisdiction.

As all power in heaven is given to the saviour, it follows that he is lord over every creature in heaven. All the angels of God are commanded to worship him, under his direction they go forth as ministering spirits, *to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation.* Departed saints are with Christ, the spirits of just men are made perfect by him, and he is at the head of the general assembly and church of the first-born.

Hell itself is not beyond the limits of Christ's dominion; thither his authority extends, for he hath *the keys of hell and death.* *He went and preached to the spirits in prison, which sometimes were disobedient, namely, while the ark was preparing,* which proves that his ministrations as mediator extend even to that place. Hell shall deliver up all its prisoners to be judged by Christ, therefore his authority must reach to the place of their confinement.

III. *The saviour is lord over all creatures, in all places, in reference to all things.* Creation is ascribed to him. Christ is not only the brightness of the Father's glory, and his express image, but *the upholding of all things by the word of his power, by him all things consist,* therefore

therefore the whole œconomy of divine providence is under his management. His lordship extends over every thing which relates to grace and salvation. *Grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.* There is salvation in none other, *he is able to save unto the uttermost them that come unto God by him:* he is the dispenser of all the blessings of the gospel. *The Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgement to the Son, hath given him power to execute judgement, because he is the son of man, hath appointed a day in which he will judge the world in righteousness, by him:* consequently it is a part of the mediatorial work of Christ to judge, reward, and punish every man, according to his works. All things relative to the accomplishment of the divine promises and prophecies, and the fulfilling of the divine counsel, that God may be all in all, are under the direction of Jesus Christ.

IV. *The redeemer is lord over all creatures, in all places, in reference to all things, throughout all periods.* The lordship of Christ extends through all the changing scenes of the present state unto his second coming. He hath received the book sealed with seven seals, from the right hand of him that sat upon the throne; he hath unloosed the seals thereof, and hath carried, is carrying, and will carry, into effect the wonderful concatenation of events therein described. So far as the events relate to the period which must elapse before his appearing, he

he will carry them into effect by his unseen influence and authority. Then he will reign upon earth, and establish his kingdom from shore to shore, unto the ends thereof, until all the great events which fall within that period shall have taken place. Nor will the lordship of Christ terminate with the last judgement; but continue through the *aions*, or ages to come afterwards, through the long periods of rewards and punishments, until he shall have wiped away tears from all faces, and put an end to all pain, sorrow, crying, and death. *For he must reign until all enemies are put under his feet. When all things are subdued unto him, and not before, he will give up his commission to him from whom he received it, having first executed every part thereof, that God may be all in all.*

I next call your attention to the great ends which are to be answered by the lordship of Jesus Christ.

The most high God never can act without design, or without having an end in view, nor can he ever propose an end that is not infinitely wise and benevolent, because he cannot act contrary to himself; but if God must necessarily have some wise and benevolent end in view in every thing which he does, it must follow, that he had a design infinitely wise and benevolent, which he would carry into effect by Jesus Christ, when he raised him to his mediatorial throne, and delivered all things into his hands:
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it also follows that this design must be completely effected, or God himself will be disappointed, and Christ fail of accomplishing the whole of his mediatorial work. When we consider that God is declared to be *the very God of peace*, and observe what disorder and confusion prevails every where through sin, what appears so likely to be the design of God, so consistent with his infinite wisdom and goodness in raising up a mediator, as the restoration of universal peace, by the removal of sin and its effects? This is rendered more than likely, when we consider that he on whose shoulder the government is laid, is called *the prince of peace*: for if he was to consign to endless misery, or to annihilation, millions of creatures, and so render enmity, or destruction eternal, might not he be called the prince of confusion and destruction, as well as the prince of peace? Seeing, if he restored some to peace, in that case, he would fix others in confusion and destruction to all eternity: certainly it must be much more consistent with his character ultimately to restore all to peace. The end of Christ's dying was to make peace; the gospel is a message of peace to all mankind, which proves that the design of God is to effect universal peace by him. Those who believe the gospel have joy and peace through believing, the fruit of the Spirit is peace, and when the kingdom of Messiah shall prevail throughout the world, there will be universal peace from one end of

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the earth to the other. We have exprefs and positive evidence in the scriptures, that, the design of God is *to reconcile all things unto himself by Jesus Christ, to gather together, or rehead, all things in one in him.* I think, it follows from the foregoing premises, that the mediation of Christ is intended to effect universal peace in the creation, by destroying all the enmity which exists in the minds of creatures.

As the throne of Christ is established in righteousness, *as righteousness shall be the girdle of his loins, and faithfulness the girdle of his reins, as he shall not fail, nor be discouraged, until he hath set truth in the earth, and as he is able to subdue all things to himself,* we may be assured he will not fail to accomplish all the ends for which he is raised to the mediatorial throne. John had a vision of the accomplishment of these things, when he heard *every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, ascribe blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever.*

I shall conclude this discourse with a few practical remarks.

We, who have believed on the Son of God, who have professed ourselves his servants, have avowed our allegiance to him, as our Lord;
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are we found obedient to his commands? Remember, it is not our calling him Lord; but our doing those things which he hath commanded, that will fit us for his kingdom of rewards. We are not our own, we are bought with a price; let us therefore glorify the Lord in our bodies and spirits, which are the Lord's. He is the master of our faith, let us acknowledge none other. He is the Lord of our consciences, let us pay a conscientious regard to all his sayings. He hath all blessings to bestow, and is capable of doing all things for us; let us therefore put an entire confidence in him. He has an unlimited authority over us, let us yield him unlimited subjection.

DISCOURSE III.

1 JOHN IV. 16.

*He that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in GOD, and
GOD in him.*



IT cannot well be denied that those who believe the doctrine of the universal restoration of all creatures to purity and happiness, have more enlarged views of the love of God than any other description of professors of the gospel: for they conceive the divine love to all his works to be unchangeable and eternal; whereas others suppose, some, that the love of God extends only to a part of mankind, that to them it is inextinguishable and perpetual; but that the rest of the human race have no interest in it; some, that God loves all his creatures conditionally,

conditionally, but that their not performing the conditions will for ever extinguish the love of God to them ; both the one and the other limits the divine love in some sense, and none but the universalist allows it to be unlimited in every sense. The advocate for the universal restoration supposes that God always remains in a disposition of love to all his creatures, therefore he considers abiding in God and abiding in love, in the most unbounded sense, to be one and the same thing. Whether such a view of the divine love be calculated to have a good or bad moral effect, is what we have now to examine,

The practical tendency of religious systems, their effect upon the heart, and upon the life of those who profess them, the great importance of integrity of soul, of uprightness of conduct, of love and benevolence, and of moral excellence in general, are things which have been too generally overlooked. Formerly, if a man did but agree to a particular creed, written or understood, if he could but espouse the dogmas of a party, and submit to the performances of a religious kind carried on among them, unless there was something very flagitious in his conduct, he passed for a very good christian with those of his own fraternity ; but if he had integrity enough to express his dissent, when he did not perceive a thing to be true ; uprightness enough to spurn at dogmas, which did not appear to him consistent with the scriptures ; he

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was deemed a heretic, and his moral excellence stood for nothing at all. Alas ! too much of this old leaven still remains among the professors of the gospel. Happily the attention of many, in the present age, is turned to the examination of the practical tendency of different systems ; the maxim, that no religious tenets can be useful any further than they improve the heart, and influence to virtuous and benevolent actions, is gaining ground ; the terms heterodox and heretic cease to affrighten men out of their integrity, as they once did ; and moral excellence is rising into higher estimation among the serious professors of christianity.

The doctrine of the universal restoration of lapsed intelligences to happiness, has been frequently charged with having a licentious tendency. Either this charge is, or it is not, well founded ; if it be well founded, it must be capable of being substantiated by clear and undeniable proofs ; if no such proofs can be produced, it must fall to the ground. The above is a very serious and heavy charge ; it ought not to be lightly brought forward against any doctrine, those who advance it ought to have proofs at hand to make it good ; for he who advances charges without proofs, defames. I feel no reluctance to engage in defending the universal doctrine from the charge of licentiousness, being fully persuaded that it is not only free from the least immoral tendency, but also calculated to produce superior moral effects,

effects, to those doctrines which are founded upon a less extended view of the love of God. Both these points, I undertake to prove.

Persons of different descriptions have supposed the doctrine of the restoration to have an immoral tendency, I will glance at their different characters. There are many men who will not attend to calm impartial investigation, and closely examine evidence upon this subject; they are either too indolent, or too much prepossessed by prejudice and bigotry to do this; either they cannot, or they will not come forward with fair and rational arguments; but content themselves with charging the doctrine with an immoral tendency, and then conclude, on the ground of their own unfounded charge, that it must be false. We might retort upon these men their own charge with far greater propriety; but it will be better for us to refute it by evidence. Many men of real piety, not having properly considered the subject, and being zealously concerned for the interests of holiness, oppose the doctrine of the restoration, from a serious apprehension that the belief of it would weaken the ties of duty, and injure the cause of virtue and piety, I wish to convince such persons that their apprehensions are unfounded, and that the doctrine we maintain is calculated to promote holiness. There is a danger of those who profess the universal doctrine holding the truth in unrighteousness—of those who believe it not sufficiently considering the
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the practical tendency of their own sentiments—of their not having always present with them the motives to obedience which the doctrine furnishes—of their not sufficiently exemplifying in their lives its tendency to holiness: for the sake of these its practical tendency is to be insisted on. The foregoing are my reasons for entering upon this subject.

I. *I will first attempt to prove that the doctrine of the universal restoration has no tendency to licentiousness.*

All the doctrines of divine revelation have a direct tendency to produce love to God, and love to man, to promote holiness of heart and life; therefore if the doctrine of the restoration can be proved to be a doctrine of scripture, it will follow that it can have no evil, but must have a good tendency. Many strong evidences of its truth have been repeatedly brought from the scriptures, and a number of forcible arguments advanced in support of it, which have not been answered, and I believe never can: hence I conclude that it is unfair to charge this doctrine with an immoral tendency, it would be more consistent for its opponents to attempt a refutation of what are deemed its evidences.

If a doctrine could be proved false merely on the ground of its being charged with a licentious tendency, what religious doctrine is there that might not be proved false; for this charge
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has been brought against every doctrine in turn, consequently it can do nothing towards proving any doctrine false: for if one doctrine could be proved false, merely by a vague charge of immoral tendency, every doctrine might be proved false in the same way, and it would follow, that there is no such thing as religious truth in the world. The charge of immoral tendency was brought against Paul's doctrine of salvation by grace, yet the apostle's doctrine was true. The charge of immoral tendency can be no argument against the truth of the universal doctrine, because it proves abundantly too much, and therefore proves nothing, unless it be the weakness of those who apply it as an argument.

Can it be said, with any degree of fairness, that a doctrine which has for its object the total extirpation of sin from the whole creation, tends to promote sin? Can such a doctrine be less calculated to promote holiness, than the opposite, which supposes that sin must endlessly remain in millions of creatures; that evil must be as permanent as good; that enmity and rebellion must remain as long as God himself exists?

Can that doctrine have an evil tendency, which supposes that all the dispensations, dealings, and operations of God, are calculated and designed to recover all his creatures from sin and its effects? Can the supposition that all the blessings which the Most High bestows upon individuals are intended to make them a blessing to others,

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and to promote the ends of universal benevolence, have a licentious tendency?

Can that doctrine which supposes that God is love, that every thing which proceeds from God proceeds from love, that every thing which he does is done in love, which brings the soul to dwell in love as its proper element, and which supposes love to be the only genuine principle of action in a christian, fail to furnish powerful motives to obedience?

Can that doctrine have a licentious tendency, which makes sin and misery inseparable, holiness and happiness stand connected together with the nicest proportion? surely not.

Should our opponents be able to produce instances of persons, who profess to believe the doctrine of the restoration, leading immoral lives, this would by no means prove the charge of immoral tendency against the doctrine itself; for if the evil conduct of those who profess to believe a doctrine, could prove the doctrine professed by them false, the doctrine of Christ had been proved false by the evil conduct of Judas, and christianity itself might be proved a system of falsehood by the immoral conduct of its professors.

The professed belief of the universal restoration has never been attended with immoral effects, which bear any comparison to those which have

have appeared among the professors of the opposite doctrine. Have not all the persecuting popes, bloody inquisitors, all the tyrants and destroyers of mankind, under the christian name, professed to believe the doctrine of endless punishment? Do not the openly profane and profligate, in this land, believe the doctrine of endless misery, if they believe any thing at all about future punishment? What good effects have the doctrine of endless punishment produced among the bulk of its professors? Have they been restrained from the greatest cruelties and impieties, by the fear of endless torment? How would our opponents like to have all the crimes which have been committed by those who have maintained the doctrine of endless punishment, charged upon that doctrine? Let them first examine the practical effects which have followed, where the doctrine of eternal torments has been maintained, before they attempt to explode the universal doctrine, on the supposition of its licentious tendency. The above charge will be more completely refuted by the remainder of this discourse.

H. I shall attempt to prove, that the belief of the doctrine of the universal restoration, has a superior practical tendency to every other system, built upon the more limited views of the love of God.

The belief that future punishment will be limited and corrective, is the best calculated of any view of future punishment, which I have

ever heard of, to restrain men from adding sin to sin, and multiplying their transgressions against God: because it supposes punishment to be proportioned to the number and magnitude of the crimes committed by the punished, and the inveteracy of their rebellion of heart. If a man who goes on the highway to rob, &c. knew that whether he committed one, or five hundred robberies; whether he stole one shilling, or ten thousand pounds; whether he simply robbed a man, or in addition to the robbery maimed, bruised, or even murdered him; whether he perpetrated one, or five hundred murders, he should, if detected, suffer the same degree of punishment; that he should be hanged for the least, and only hanged for the greatest of the above crimes, however often repeated. Would such views of punishment be calculated, after he had committed one crime, to deter him from repeating it, and adding thereto others far more atrocious? Would he not feel that he could expose himself to no greater punishment than that which he had already exposed himself to? Apply this to the subject before us. Endless misery is endless misery, annihilation is annihilation, and if one sin exposes to either of these punishments, millions of sins, however aggravated in their circumstances, can do no more: it follows, that upon the hypothesis of sinners being punished in the future state, either with endless misery, or annihilation, all proportion between crimes and punishments is totally lost sight of; for all who are found in their sins at
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the day of judgment will be cast into the same lake of fire. How can such views of future punishment be calculated to restrain sinners from adding to the number, and increasing the magnitude of their sins; seeing all apprehension of increasing their punishment must be thereby removed? If, on the contrary, the robber mentioned above was convinced that his punishment, when detected, would be exactly proportioned to his crimes, would not that conviction be calculated to restrain him from adding murder to simple robbery, or one robbery and murder to another? So, for sinners to know that the punishment of sin in a future state will be more or less limited, in proportion to the number and nature of their sins; and that by increasing the number and magnitude of their sins, they will increase the punishment which awaits them in a future state, is, I conceive, better calculated to restrain the sinner from heaping up wrath against the day of wrath, than any other view of future punishment.

The universal doctrine places the divine character before the sinner, who is under deep conviction of sin, and feels the greatest distress on account of his transgressions, in that light which is best calculated to excite him to hope in the divine mercy, and trust in God for his salvation. The great obstacle which prevents sensible sinners looking to God for deliverance, is their supposing that their sins have extinguished his love to them, and that he is full of wrath
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and fury against them. If, in such a state of mind, they hear that the sins of creatures are capable of quite extinguishing the divine love to them, and of kindling in God implacable wrath, unrelenting revenge, and endless fury against them, it will be natural for them to suppose that this is the case with respect to themselves, which supposition is calculated to extinguish all hope in their breasts, and drive them to despair; but if they be assured, that nothing can extinguish the love of God to his creatures; that his wrath proceeds from love; that all the punishments inflicted by him are intended for the good of creatures, to bring them to proper reflection; that as a proof of his love to sinners indiscriminately, he gave his son to die for them; that their sins have made no change in God, only in themselves; that consequently nothing is necessary but for them to be brought to a proper state of mind, in order to their receiving the divine mercy and grace; such views of things will be calculated to remove their doubts of the possibility of their salvation, and bring them to trust in the name of the LORD: for they that know his name will put their trust in him. The reason why sinners do not trust in God is because they continue strangers to his love, as revealed in the scriptures; but the views entertained of the divine character by universalists, are calculated to assure sinners universally of the unchangeable love of the Most High to them, consequently to bring them to trust in him.

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As we cannot love any object any farther than that object appears lovely in our eyes, I conceive the universal doctrine is calculated to inspire the christian with more love to God than the opposite view of subjects, as it makes his character appear in the most amiable light. As it is declared that *we love him because he first loved us*; as his love is the cause of our love to him, and as causes operate, in a moral sense, no further than they are perceived and felt, it cannot be supposed that we can love God any further than we have a perception of his love: if our views of his love be narrowed, our love to him will be narrowed in proportion. If our views of his love be enlarged, our love to him will be enlarged likewise. The reason why men do not obey God, is because they do not love him; the reason why they do not love him, is because they do not believe that he loves them; hence I infer, that the universal doctrine is calculated to make all men obedient to God, because its direct tendency is to make them love him, by convincing them that he loves them.

The views of the love of God to his creatures universally, to which the doctrine of the restoration leads, are calculated to inspire our minds with love to all men, even to the most vicious, to our greatest enemies; for it supposes that God loves all men, even his greatest enemies; that he loves sinners notwithstanding all their sins, and that therefore we are to do the same.

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We are to hate their evil doings, not their persons. Because God loves his enemies, he hath commanded us to love our enemies. He will overcome all evil in his creatures by his unbounded goodness; therefore he hath commanded us to overcome evil with good. Those who deny the doctrine of the restoration seem to think that God hath called upon us to be more perfect in our love to others, than himself is.

As love is the principle of all obedience, that view of subjects which is most calculated to inspire us with love to God and man, must have the most tendency to render us fruitful in all obedience. There can be no obedience without love, it is the fulfilling of the law, the end of the gospel declaration, the germe of all social and relative duties; it can work no ill, but produceth only good to others. If God did not love all his creatures, upon what foundation could he command us to love them? If he was not continually aiming at their happiness, how could he call upon us to be doing so? If his love to them could ever be extinguished, how could ours be kept up?

The universal doctrine is calculated to stifle all personal resentments, revenge, retaliation, &c. because it shews that such principles can have no place in God, consequently that they ought to have no place in us; on the contrary, that every thing which he does proceeds from love

love to his creatures, and is done with a view to their happiness, and that so it ought to be with us. If you take away the doctrine of the restoration, and the light in which it places the divine character before us, I know of no principles or motives, which will remain, sufficient to render practicable the maxims inculcated by Christ and his apostles; but admit that doctrine and every thing has a principle and motive sufficient to carry it into effect.

The doctrine for which I am pleading teaches us, that whatever blessings we receive, whatever abilities we possess, are to be all employed for the good of others. It is calculated to keep the mind in the greatest activity, and to produce the greatest liberality of sentiment and conduct. It opens before us a boundless field for investigation respecting God and his infinite perfections, his designs of unbounded benevolence, and the ages to come in which those designs will be carried into effect. It teaches us, that those who are in error are still to be objects of our love, and that sooner or later they will be convinced of, and acknowledge their error. Universal love is calculated to root out bigotry, prejudice, rancor, &c. those foes to liberality.

If Calvinists and Arminians were to receive the universal doctrine, they might still retain all that is valuable in their different systems. The Calvinist might still maintain the unchangeable nature of divine love, the immutability of the

divine designs, the certainty of all those being made happy for whom Christ died. The Arminian might still maintain the universality of divine love, of the benevolent designs of the Most High, and of the death of Christ. They might both agree to bury all their differences, embrace each other with christian affection, and act together with entire harmony: and I see not how these contending parties can be firmly united but upon the universal plan.

The doctrine of the universal restoration sets aside the most formidable arguments of Deists against divine revelation, as their arguments suppose the scriptures to contain doctrines inconsistent with the infinite wisdom, power, and goodness of the Creator of the universe; but if the doctrine of the restoration be established, such suppositions are evidently groundless.

It remains for us to exemplify these things by our spirit and conduct.

DISCOURSE IV.

JAMES I. 18.

That we should be a kind of first-fruits of his creatures.

IT has been sometimes objected to the doctrine of the restoration of all mankind to purity and happiness, that it has a tendency to make sinners think lightly of the gospel, of believing in Christ, and of obedience to him in the present state; seeing, if that doctrine be true, they are sure to be reconciled and made happy in the end. My design in this discourse is to obviate the above objection, by shewing the great importance of an attention to the gospel in this life, of believing in Christ, and being obedient to him in the present state, the very great advantages to be enjoyed both here and

hereafter by those who receive the glad tidings and follow Christ now; which advantages will not be enjoyed by those who die in their sins, though they be ultimately restored to purity and happiness.

1. Let us enquire who are the first-fruits spoken of in the words before us.

I expect the apostle alludes, in the text, to the first-fruits among the people of Israel, which were to be presented to the Lord. Among them the first-born of man and of beast, as well as the first-fruits of the earth, were considered as belonging to God. The tribe of Levi was taken for priests and ministers of the sanctuary, instead of the first-born of every family. Christ is the first-fruit of the Father's love. It is to divine love we are indebted for him, and all the favors and blessings we receive through him: it is through this precious fruit of JEHOVAH's love we are saved, and made partakers of all the riches of his goodness. Jesus is the first-born of every creature, the first begotten from the dead, the first-fruits of them that slept, that, in all things, he might have the pre-eminence; the right of inheritance, of priesthood, and of government, which in ancient times belonged to the first-born, all attach to him in the fullest sense. Christ Jesus, therefore, is the first-fruit in the highest possible sense.

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The apostles were the first-fruits of Christ's ministry; they were given to him as such by the Father: yet the apostles were to bring forth fruit in their ministry, who are also called first-fruits. We read of the first-fruits in Achaia, &c. in reference to the effects produced by the apostolic ministry. The Lord chose his immediate followers, and ordained them, that they should go forth, and bring forth much fruit, and that their fruit should remain, (*i. e.*) that they should preach the gospel in the world, and thereby bring forth many sinners from a state of ignorance and rebellion, as fruits unto God and the Lamb, and that the effects of their ministry should be permanent. That not only the apostles and first christians, but all who believe on the Lord Jesus Christ in the present state, are first-fruits, in the sense in which the expression is used in the text, I think is evident. The apostle speaks of all those whom God hath begotten of his own will by the word of truth, as being a kind of first-fruits of his creatures; but all who believe on the name of Christ are born of the will of God; it follows that all such are included in the first-fruits. He states their being a kind of first-fruits of the creatures, as the end which God had in view in begetting them of his own will by the word of truth, how then can it be supposed that God hath not this end in view whenever a sinner is begotten by him to newness of life, by the word of truth. Is not the general assembly of the saints called the church of the first-

first-born? Do we not find a vast multitude called in the Apocalypse the first-fruits unto God and the Lamb? It is evident the apostles and first christians could not be all the first-fruits, for it does not appear that their number was so exceedingly great, and the passage alluded to in the Apocalypse refers to a much later period. Therefore I conclude, that all who are begotten by the word of truth, (*i. e.*) all the saints, are first-fruits.

2. I will point out several things implied in the saints being called first-fruits.

When the saints are spoken of as fruits, does it not imply that they are intended to be a blessing to others? When the earth teems with plenty, when the luxuriant branches of the trees are covered with fruit, what is the design of God? Is it merely that the fruitful fields and trees should present an agreeable scene to the eye? Is it not, rather, that his creatures may be fed and nourished thereby, that their lives may be preserved, and they made happy? Why should we hesitate at admitting that the saints also, as fruits, are intended to be a blessing to the creation? Is not the light and truth of the gospel, the spirit and precepts of Jesus Christ, calculated to make them such? Is not Christ, the fruit of the father's love, exhibited as a universal blessing? Were not the apostles, the fruits of Christ's personal ministry, sent forth into the world, that they might be a blessing

sing to mankind? When JEHOVAH blessed Abraham and his seed, was it not that he might make them a blessing to others, and that all families of the earth might be blessed in them? Are not all who believe the gospel children of Abraham, according to the promise? Are not all christians called the lights of the world, and the salt of the earth? Lights are not intended to illuminate themselves, but to give light to all around: and the saints, as lights, are intended to enlighten the world. Salt is not intended to season itself, but something else to which it is applied: and the saints, as salt, are intended to season the earth. Therefore when the saints are called fruits, we may safely conclude, that, as such, they are intended to be a blessing to mankind.

The term first-fruits evidently implies that there are other fruits to be collected in due season, so men generally understand it, except in one case, I mean when it implies the universal restoration; but why an exception should be made in this case, more than any other, I know not. Does any man suppose, that it would be dishonourable to God, to make all his creatures ultimately pure and happy? If so, was it not dishonourable for him to create them pure and happy at first? Does any one suppose, that if the whole creation be made happy, his enjoyment will be thereby diminished? He ought rather to think the contrary, if his present happiness arises from feelings

ings of love. The first-fruits among the Jews were not the whole harvest, but a part thereof, which was presented to the LORD; and, when accepted by him, an earnest of his blessing upon the whole. When the first-fruits were collected, the Israelites did not set fire to their fields, and totally consume all the remainder: no, they collected the remainder afterwards. When Christ is called the first-fruits of them that slept, no one imagines that none but Christ shall rise from the dead; but, on the contrary, it is generally supposed that his resurrection is an earnest of the resurrection of all the dead. Why then, when the saints are called first-fruits, should it be supposed that they are the only fruits of the love of God, of the death, resurrection, and mediation of Jesus Christ, which shall ever be gathered in; and that when the first-fruits are collected, the rest of the harvest of creatures shall be endlessly cast away? Do not the numerous first-fruits evidently imply that there will be a much more numerous harvest? Is not he who gathers in the first-fruits, capable of gathering in the whole harvest?

I will mention a few things more which will corroborate the foregoing reasoning. We read of the saints having the first-fruits of the spirit, this implies that there are other fruits of the spirit to be bestowed; but what other fruits of the spirit can we conceive of, unless we take the words, *And it shall come to pass*
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afterward, that I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh, in their plain and literal sense, and believe that GOD will, sooner or later, pour out his spirit upon all mankind? The saints are made kings and priests unto GOD, and shall reign as such on the earth; but how can this be, unless we suppose there are other creatures to whom they will then minister, as kings and priests? *The earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of GOD. Because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of GOD.* But how can this be, if no manifestation of GOD, if no deliverance is to be afforded through the medium of the saints, to those who have not been delivered in the present state? Paul mentions the present reconciliation of those who believe, as a sample and an earnest of the reconciliation of all things to GOD. Col. i. 21. Therefore I conclude that the world at large will be after-fruits to GOD, through the ministry of the first-fruits.

3. I proceed to state the advantages which are, and will be, enjoyed by the first-fruits, and which will not be enjoyed by the rest of mankind.

Here I think it necessary to point out wherein I conceive forgiveness, salvation, and acceptance, as stated in the New Testament, to differ from the future restoration of the wicked. Forgiveness includes a remission of punishment;

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but those who are not forgiven, through the gospel, must be punished in a future state, according to what they have done. Salvation, as enjoyed through the gospel, includes deliverance from the wrath to come; but those who reject and disobey the gospel will not escape the wrath to come. Acceptance, in an evangelical sense, comprehends the being taken into the relation of sons and daughters to the Lord Almighty, the being made joint-heirs with Christ, a kind of first-fruits of the creatures, kings and priests unto God and the Lamb; but none of these honours and advantages belong to those who reject the gospel, and die in their sins. These I think are not merely ideal, but real and important distinctions.

The benefits arising from believing the gospel, and following Christ, are very great in the present life. The knowledge of forgiveness of sins is an inestimable blessing, and is enjoyed by all who believe. View the man who is under sin, and sensible of his situation:—his conscience is full of guilt and remorse—his mind is the seat of condemnation—his bosom is agitated with a thousand tormenting fears, gloomy forebodings, and dismal apprehensions of death, judgment, future punishment—the dreadful consequences of his living in rebellion against God, and of his neglecting the gospel of Christ. Is such a man's state enviable? It must necessarily be wretched to an extreme, and however men may stupify their consciences for

for a season, they will sooner or later feel themselves the subjects of this wretchedness. What happiness can earthly enjoyments afford to persons in such a situation? Having the wrath of GOD abiding on them, they can enjoy no real felicity. What an unspeakable blessing it must be to be delivered from such a state—to be justified by faith, and have peace with GOD, through our Lord Jesus Christ—to have our sins forgiven for his name's sake—to have our consciences freed from guilt and condemnation—to have slavish tormenting fear cast out, and our minds filled with joy and peace through believing—to exchange our gloomy apprehensions and dismal forebodings, for a hope full of immortality, which is as an anchor to the soul, sure and steadfast, reaching unto that within the veil. The former is the alarming state of those who reject the gospel; the latter the enviable situation of those who believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and tread in his steps.

There is no peace saith my GOD to the wicked. The wicked are like the troubled sea, whose waters cast up mire and dirt. Men can never be happy while living in enmity, hateful and hating one another. The very nature of sin is such that it cannot fail, so far as we are under its influence and dominion, to destroy our peace and make us miserable. What advantage did you ever derive from sin? Have you not found that its whole tendency is to make you

miserable? What advantage then can you expect from a continuance therein? GOD is the only source of happiness, but your sins separate between you and your GOD, consequently between you and the only source of happiness: where then can you look for enjoyment? The baneful passions of envy, hatred, malice, &c. destroy all social felicity. Every sinful propensity you indulge, every sinful action you commit, is a blow at your peace, a dagger pointed against your enjoyment. How then can you fail to be miserable while you continue in sin? Seeing this is the case, of what great importance it must be to your present happiness, for you to attend to the gospel, to receive the salvation of GOD, and be thereby delivered from that which has been the bane of your peace, and the source of incalculable mischief to you. How great must be the advantage of becoming obedient to the faith—of being made holy, because it is the only way to become happy!

Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of GOD. What an honour, what an inexpressible blessing, it is to be accepted in the beloved—to have free access unto GOD, through Jesus Christ—to come with boldness to the throne of grace—to receive the spirit of adoption, crying Abba, Father—to have so many great and precious promises to support our minds, to enjoy GOD in his word and ordinances,
and

and participate in all the riches of his grace. What privileges are these! yet those who continue in sin, and reject the gospel of Christ, remain strangers to all these privileges.

View the guilty creature who remains ignorant of the gospel, and in a state of rebellion against God, when brought into a state of heavy trial and affliction, he knows not where to fly for help and refuge — his mind sinks in despondency — he murmurs, repines, and feels extreme wretchedness. View the real christian in similar circumstances; he knows he has a Father possessed of infinite perfection, whose bosom is full of tenderness, to whom he can fly and pour out all his complaints — he knows that the everlasting arms of his God are ready to support him, and that he has an high priest who is touched with the feeling of all his infirmities—he casts himself upon the divine protection, and his mind is soothed to peace—he knows that all things work together for good, to them that love God, and he glories in tribulation. Such are the advantages, in this life, of receiving and enjoying Christ.

Contemplate the situation of the unbeliever in the hour of death — what pleasure can he then derive from the retrospect of his past conduct — the remembrance that his days have been spent in vanity and folly—his life wasted in rebellion against his maker—the recollection that he has all along neglected the great salvation

tion? It cannot be a pleasant, but must be a very bitter recollection. If his thoughts be carried forward to a future state, all is blackness and darkness. To meet the Saviour in the tremendous character of supreme Judge, and receive at his hands according to the deeds done in the body, must be an alarming idea to the man who is just leaving the world in his sins. Hell and the lake of fire must be most terrific objects to him. What can his fame and reputation, his riches and sensual gratifications, his sinful companions, or his dearest friends, do for him when going to his last account, with all his sins upon his head? Alas! these will then be found miserable comforters. On the other hand, contemplate the dying saint, who knows in whom he hath believed, and that his God is with him in the valley of the shadow of death, that consequently he hath no evil to fear when passing through it, the man who hath been justified and sanctified, whose study hath been to please God, he falls asleep in Jesus, rejoicing in the prospect of being for ever with the Lord. Contemplate these things, and then say, if present faith and holiness be not of the greatest importance, though the doctrine of the restoration be fully admitted.

If the advantages of faith and obedience be so great, and the effects of unbelief and disobedience be so painful, in the present state, what must both the one and the other be hereafter! When Christ shall descend from heaven,
with

with the voice of the Archangel and the trump of God, them that sleep in Jesus, will God bring with him—when he, their life, shall appear, then shall they also appear with him in glory, and shall reign with him on the earth; but the wicked shall then be shut up in blackness of darkness, in all the horrors of the pit. When Christ shall appear on the throne of judgment, the righteous will be placed on his right hand; but the wicked on his left; the former he will pronounce the blessed of his Father, and welcome them to the kingdom prepared for them from the foundation of the world; but the latter the Saviour himself, in the awful character of judge, will pronounce accursed, and command them to depart from him into the age-lasting fire, prepared for the Devil and his angels: they will be cast into the lake of fire which is the second death. How great will the difference appear between the righteous and the wicked, when these things take place.

Those who overcome through the blood of the Lamb, and the testimony of God, will not be hurt of the second death. Blessed and holy is he who hath part in the first resurrection, on such the second death shall have no power; but the cowardly, and unbelieving, &c. must have their portion in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: they must suffer the pains and horrors, the torments and miseries of the second death. During the time the wicked are in a state of punishment, the righteous

teous will be free from all pain and suffering, entered into the joy of their Lord, glorified with Christ, basking in the unbounded ocean of love and felicity. I conceive, that, during the ages of punishment, the knowledge of the saints will be still encreasing, their enjoyment enlarging, all their virtues growing, and every thing which relates to them carried to still higher perfection; but the sufferers in the lake of fire, will have to begin their course of virtue and happiness, when their punishment is ended: therefore a great disparity must remain between the righteous and the wicked, the latter must be incalculable losers by their unbelief and rebellion. They will lose all the enjoyments of christianity in the present state; the honours, peculiar enjoyments, and high felicities of the first-fruits, will not attach to them. They will suffer the age of pain, misery, &c. in the lake of fire, while the saints are with Christ in glory. Their happiness will begin after ages of improvement and enjoyment have rolled over the saints. They will entirely lose the great rewards which Christ will bestow upon his faithful servants. Hence I conclude, that those who suppose, if the doctrine of the universal restoration be true, it is of no consequence whether men attend to the gospel or not in the present state, ought to prove that there are no advantages of consequence connected with believing now, that it is of no consequence whether men escape or suffer the second death, which never can be proved

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The subject we are attending to is of the greatest practical utility. God hath manifested his love to us guilty perishing creatures, by giving his only begotten Son to die for us; he hath sent the gospel of his grace to make known unto us his great salvation, therein he calls us to repentance, and to receive the forgiveness of our sins. The gospel contains every thing we stand in need of as sinners—we are in darkness, it exhibits the true light, and is sent to open our eyes, to bring us from darkness to light—we are in a state of condemnation, it exhibits free pardon—we are in a state of enmity, it is the word of reconciliation, intended to reconcile us to God—we are depraved and polluted, therein the blood of Christ is set forth as sufficient to cleanse us from all sin—whatever can be necessary to make us happy it contains. But replete as the gospel is with all the blessings of divine grace, suited as it is to our capacities and situations, we can receive its benefits no further than we believe it, and act under its influence: hence the great necessity, the vast importance of attending to, believing and obeying the gospel of Christ. Awful threatnings are expressed, dreadful punishments set forth in the book of God, which we cannot escape, if we turn away from him who speaketh from heaven. Precious promises are given, and great rewards held forth, in the scriptures; but we can neither enjoy the promises, nor be prepared for the rewards, while we are neglecting the great salvation. What need I add more to con-

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vince you how much it is your interest to embrace the gospel, and walk under its influence? There is no other way in which you can be made happy, no other way in which you can escape the wrath to come. *Without faith it is impossible to please God. Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord.*

DISCOURSE

DISCOURSE V.

ROMANS II. 6.

*Who will render to every man according to his
deeds.*

THOUGH, without a divine revelation, we could have no certain knowledge of a future state of rewards and punishments, the belief of such a state when revealed is altogether reasonable. Virtue is not always rewarded, nor vice always punished, in this world; the righteous are frequently trodden down as the mire in the streets, and the wicked suffered to triumph in their iniquities; but if there be a God of justice, who made and governs the world, it is quite rational to suppose that he will, sooner or later, reward the one, and punish the other; and if there will be a state of

rewards and punishments. what can be more equitable, than for every man to receive according to his deeds. It is the subject of future punishment, which I shall endeavour to investigate at this time.

The doctrine of future punishment is clearly a doctrine of scripture. If the wicked were not to be punished hereafter, it would be impossible to reconcile present appearances with the divine character and perfections, as set forth in the lively oracles. Would it be consistent with the moral government of infinite wisdom, power, justice, and goodness, to let sin go unpunished? Could it be reconciled with the equity of the divine proceedings, with God's being no respecter of persons? Certainly it could not. It is of such great importance to the moral system, that I see not how that system could be maintained if sin was suffered always to remain unpunished. Future punishment is so clearly expressed in the sacred writings, that I know not how any man can seriously examine them without seeing it; a future judgment would be a mere farce, if a state of rewards and punishments were not to follow it. The certainty of a future judgment is urged as a reason why all men every where should repent, as a reason why we should not judge one another now, and as a reason why we should always labour to be approved of God. Our text, viewed in its connection, evidently refers to what God will do in a future state.

1. *I will*

1. *I will attempt to state the cause of future punishment.*

The cause of God's punishing sinners in a future state, will not be the extinction of his love to the unhappy subjects of that punishment. The love of God can no more be extinguished than his nature can change, for *he is love*: consequently he could as soon cease to be God, as cease to be love. Tender parents do not punish their children because they have ceased to love them; on the contrary, they punish them from a principle of love; but no parent can be so tender and affectionate as the Parent of the Universe, the Father of Spirits, whose offspring we all are. What would be our thoughts of that parent, who, suffering every parental feeling to be extinguished in his breast, should punish his offspring merely from a vindictive disposition? Should we not think him a very bad character? Shall we suppose the God of love to be such a character? Far be it from us.

The reason of God's punishing sinners hereafter, will not be that his tender mercies will then be clean passed over, that his compassion will then utterly fail, for *his mercy endured for ever, his compassion fails not, he is good unto all, and his tender mercies are over all his works*: and as goodness is essential to the Most High, as his mercy endureth for ever, this must continue to be the case so long as any objects of
mercy

mercy, (*i. e.*) creatures in a state of misery, are to be found. His mercy will have to do even with his rendering unto every man according to his works. Psalm lxii. 12.

Sin is evidently the cause of all punishment--of all the pains and sufferings of the present state, and of the wrath to come. It is sin that separates sinners from God, that subjects them to the awful displeasure of the Most High. The iniquity of the wicked shall take them away, and they shall be holden in the cords of their sins. In particular unbelief, the rejection of the saviour, and what is consequent thereupon, will be the cause of future damnation. Christ himself declared, *he that believeth not shall be damned. This is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, but men loved darkness, and would not come unto the light.* The wisdom of God saith, *because I have called, and ye refused; I have stretched out my hand and no man regarded; but ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my reproof: I also will laugh at your calamity, &c.* It must appear wise and good, as well as just, to subject to the wrath to come those who will not bend their ears to the voice of mercy, who will not come unto Christ, that they might have life, who remain incorrigible in their unbelief, and impenitent in their sins: Seeing nothing short of future punishment can bring *them* to a sense of their wretched state, and convince them of the evil of their doings.

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It is worthy of serious enquiry, Whether any of the human race will suffer the punishment, which will be inflicted after the last judgment, without having been previously favoured with an opportunity of becoming acquainted with Christ and his salvation. Do we not read of Christ's preaching to the spirits in prison, who were disobedient in the days of Noah? When Peter speaks of Christ judging the quick and dead, does he not add, *For, for this cause was the gospel preached also to them that are dead, that they might be judged according to men in the flesh, but live according to God in the spirit?* Do not such words convey the idea, that it was necessary for the gospel to be made known to those who had died without an opportunity of being acquainted therewith, in order to their being judged by Christ? However this may be, it is an incontrovertible fact, that if you do not escape the wrath to come, your punishment will be the fruit of wilful unbelief and disobedience. The Lord desireth not the death of a sinner; but had rather the wicked should turn from his evil ways and live: he hath made provision for the salvation of you all; but if you will reject his gospel, if you will not attend to the things which belong to your peace, before they be hid from your eyes, you must reap the bitter effects.

2. *I will endeavour to point out the nature of future punishment.*

Some

Some have supposed, that the future punishment of the wicked will be nothing more than the guilt and wrath which they will be the subjects of in their own minds; now, though I by no means think this will be their proper punishment, after the last judgement, yet guilt and wrath are effects of sin which will remain upon them, while in a state of punishment, and no doubt add to their misery. Guilt is a consciousness of sin; wrath, as it relates to the mind, a sense of the displeasure of God against sin; both these the wicked must be the subjects of in the fullest sense after the judgement day, for after every thing is laid open they can no longer remain ignorant of any thing they have done, they must have a complete consciousness of all their iniquities, they will know what they are punished for, nor can they avoid being deeply sensible of the divine displeasure against sin, when they experience the dreadful effects thereof. Solomon says, *a wounded spirit who can bear*; but of all wounded spirits, a spirit wounded with guilt, with a deep sense of the displeasure of God, is the most unbearable: if it be so now, what must it be in the future state, when there will be nothing to alleviate the pain, or to divert the attention! There will then be *indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that doeth evil*, when they shall all be convinced of all their ungodly deeds, &c.

That the wicked may receive their due punishment, they will be banished from Christ.

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He who died for them on the cross, who now invites them to himself by the gospel, will then with awful majesty, say, *depart from me ye cursed.* They have said depart from us, we desire not the knowledge of thy ways; he will then say *depart from me.* They loved cursing, it shall then come upon them. They rejected all the blessings of the gospel, therefore the Lord Jesus Christ, in the character of judge, will pronounce them accursed. Ye who are despisers of the Saviour, prepare to meet him as your judge. Ye who refuse his grace and salvation, prepare to hear him denounce a dreadful curse upon your guilty heads. Ye who now fly from the friend of sinners, look for banishment from him in the great day of accounts.

—When the ungodly are sentenced to depart from the Lord, into the lake of fire, they will be deeply sensible of the loss incurred by their transgressions. After seeing Christ on the throne of his glory, and the righteous at his right hand —after hearing him bless them in the name of his Father, and invite them to inherit the kingdom prepared for them---for the wicked to hear the judge pronounce them accursed, with the same lips with which he blessed the just, to find themselves doomed to suffer in the fiery lake, while the righteous are reigning with Christ, must surely convince them, that the loss they sustain in consequence of their having rejected the saviour, and refused to bow to his easy yoke,

yoke, is incalculably great. It will not then appear a light thing, to have neglected the gospel—to have trifled with our own souls—to have squandered away our precious time in vanity and folly—to have slighted opportunities of attending to the things which belong to our peace—to have been ashamed of Christ and his followers—to have omitted the practice of benevolence and mercy—to have exposed ourselves to the lake of fire, by preferring the pleasures of sin, to suffering reproach with the people of God: no, the remembrance of these things, will then fill the minds of sinners with deadly stings.

The proper punishment of the wicked will be the sufferings inflicted upon them in the lake of fire. However dreadful the feelings of guilt and wrath in their consciences may be—however heavy the words of the judge, *depart from me ye cursed*, may hang upon their minds—however keen their sense of loss—the positive punishment of the lake of fire will be the most dreadful of all. But some may ask, will the wicked be cast into a lake of real fire? What say the scriptures? There we read, in the most plain and positive terms, of the wicked being cast into a real lake of fire. Was it real fire by which Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed? Was the earth destroyed by real water in the days of Noah? Is it not as plainly declared, that the heavens and earth which are now, are reserved unto fire against the day of judgment

judgement and perdition, of ungodly men, as it is that Sodom was destroyed by fire, and the old world by water? If we are not to understand the scriptures according to the plain import of the words therein used, there can be no certain mode of judging of their meaning: and if we admit the plain meaning of scripture, there can be no doubt but the wicked will be literally cast into a real lake of fire. If the phrase *lake of fire* was only a metaphor, to represent the burning wrath of their own minds as preying upon the wicked, how could the judge bid them depart into it—how could they be said to be cast into it—when, according to that hypothesis, they would have it in them, and carry it along with them? It appears that as this globe hath been the theatre of their crimes—the rock on which they have built their happiness—here they will be judged, and here they will meet their punishment. It is declared the present heavens, or atmosphere, and earth, are reserved unto fire, against the day of judgement and perdition of ungodly men, it follows, that, after the judgement, the earth will, by the conflagration, be turned into a lake of fire, into which the wicked will be cast. How dreadful must the idea be of being plunged into liquid fire, there to remain, under all the pangs and horrors of the second death, for an undefined period!

3. *I proceed to some remarks on the duration of future punishment.*

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There are persons who will not admit that future punishment can be sufficiently alarming, unless it be supposed to endure to all eternity; but surely what we have noticed under the preceding head must be sufficient, if properly considered, to alarm the stoutest hearted sinner: be this as it may, I am well convinced that punishment will not be absolutely endless.

The punishment of each individual will be in exact proportion to his crimes. We are told some shall be beaten with many, some with few, stripes, which words naturally convey the idea of some being punished longer than others; but this cannot be the case if the punishment of all be endless. *God will render unto every man according to his deeds, every one shall receive the deeds done in his body, according to that which he hath done.* But can we find any two sinners whose crimes are in nature and number exactly the same? yet all who are found in their sins, in the great day of accounts, will be cast into one and the same lake of fire. How then can their punishment be proportioned to their crimes if they be either annihilated, or endlessly confined there?

The whole mass of punishment which will be inflicted on the ungodly will not be endless. There is not a single passage of scripture which, if carefully examined, and compared with other parts of the sacred writings, will convey the idea of endless punishment. The Greek adjective *æonian* does not necessarily convey the idea of
endless

endless duration; *aion*, the noun from which it is derived, cannot mean absolute eternity, because it is frequently used in the plural, and is also applied to different periods which succeed each other, for no one will admit the idea of a plurality or succession of absolute eternities; but it cannot well be supposed that any adjective can be more extensive in its import than the noun from which it is derived. The proper rendering of *aion* is age, consequently of *æonian* agical, or age-lasting, (*i. e.*) what relates to the age or ages where the word occurs, not everlasting*: it follows that future punishment being called *æonian*, by no means proves that punishment will be endless. You may satisfy yourselves, if you carefully examine, that the word everlasting, &c. as it occurs in the national translation of the scriptures, must frequently be taken in a limited sense. If a Jew were to contend that the priesthood and ordinances of the Jewish dispensation were intended to remain in force to all eternity, because in the English bible both the one and the other are said to be everlasting, &c. that consequently christianity must be false; as it is established by the abrogation of the former dispensation, would you not reply that the words everlasting, for ever, &c. could not mean endless, when connected with those things which belonged only to the former dispensation, because that dispensation was to give place to a more perfect system? If a man

* See the Notes at the end of *Scarlet's Testament*, under the words *ages* and *æonian*.

were

were to affirm that Christ will continue to minister as a priest to all eternity, that he never will deliver up the kingdom to the Father, but reign as mediator to all eternity, because his priesthood is said to be everlasting, and his throne to be for ever and ever, would you not reply that Christ will cease to act as priest when all the ends of his priesthood shall be completely answered, and that his mediatorial kingdom must terminate when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to the Father? by such replies you would admit that the word everlasting, &c. both in the Old and New Testament is sometimes used in a limited sense, why then not admit that it is used in a limited sense when applied to future punishment, seeing there are other great events which must succeed that punishment, such as the reconciling of all things, God's being all in all, &c.? If it be objected that we read of some who shall never be forgiven, neither in this world, nor in the world to come, I answer that nothing more can be proved by the case referred to, than, that those who blaspheme against the Holy Ghost shall not have their punishment remitted, either in the present or in the future state; but it by no means follows that their punishment will be endless*. If it be urged that the Lord said it had been good for Judas that he had not been born, but that if he should ever be made happy such language will not then be applicable to him; I reply, to me it appears a sufficient reason for the Lord's using

* See a letter in the Universalist's Miscellany, vol. 2, page 269, in answer to Mr. Wood's Query.

such

such language concerning Judas, if applicable to him at the time when he betrayed his master, if in the anguish of his mind which followed, his being born appeared to him to be a curse; but however this case may be explained, I think it cannot with truth be said, it had been good for Judas never to have existed, for God saw it good to give him existence, and surely no one will say it had been good for God to have acted otherwise*.

All the punishment to be inflicted upon the ungodly will be inflicted by Christ in his mediatorial capacity, consequently must terminate before the termination of his mediatorial reign. If the earth be turned into a lake of fire, and that lake of fire be the place where the wicked will be punished, it follows, that the punishment must be limited because the earth itself is to be formed anew, consequently the lake of fire must have an end before the new earth can be fully brought forth. We read of a period when there shall be no more death, but that period cannot arrive while any creature remains under either the first or second death. Punishment, as proceeding from the God of infinite goodness, and ministered by the mediator, must be intended to answer some end, for God cannot act without having an end in view worthy of himself; but what end worthy of God could be effected by

* See the Universalist's Miscellany, vol. 2, pages 51, 52, 53, remarks on the case of Judas by J. Cue.

either

either annihilation or endless misery? endless punishment would make the wrath of God eternal, and his mercy a span.

4. *I will endeavour to state the end which God hath in view, when he punishes sinners.*

God doth not punish sinners to glut a principle of revenge, from a vindictive, malevolent disposition, for no such disposition can exist in him. He saith, *fury is not in me*; it follows that he doth not punish from the impulse of furious passions. *God is love*, consequently when he inflicts punishment, it must be from a principle of love.

He doth not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men; it follows that he cannot do it from caprice or ill humour, that as he hath no pleasure in the sufferings of his creatures, he cannot punish them but in subservience to an end infinitely wise, just and benevolent.

The end which God hath in view in punishing sinners, appears to be the general good of the creation, and the particular good of the punished. Though men cannot always combine the good of the public with the good of the individual punished, the God of infinite wisdom, power and goodness can. That God hath the good of his creatures in view when he punishes them in the present state, few men, if any, will deny. This hath all along been the
case

case with respect to the Jews; all the punishment which God hath laid upon them, hath been *that they might fear that glorious and fearful name the Lord their God*. This was the case with Nebuchadnezzar, &c. God is always the same, therefore he cannot punish from different motives, and to a different end, hereafter, to what he doth now. He will never act unworthy the character of a Father in his conduct towards his rational offspring. Which of you who is a father would think of punishing his children with any other view than to effect their reformation? Are you better than God? How can we reconcile with the spirit, which all who fear God are supposed to possess, the instances mentioned in the scriptures of their praying for, and rejoicing in the punishment of the wicked, unless we suppose they considered such punishment as necessary for their reformation? Consistently with that idea we can rejoice in the execution of the most terrible judgements of God, without departing from the spirit of christianity. The psalmist prayed that Jehovah would persecute the wicked as the fire burneth the wood, that they might seek his name; that they might perish, in order that they might know that he was Most High over all the earth (Psalm lxxxiii. 14 to 18) May we improve all the judgements of God to his glory and our own good.





